



REPORT
OF
A SERMON

DELIVERED BY

Rev. Henry Ward Beecher,

AT THE DRILL SHED, CHARLOTTETOWN,

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REPORTED BY ISAAC OXENHAM.



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SERMON.

For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.—ROMANS, viii. 6-7.

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.—1 COR. ii. 14.

HESE passages are among the deepest and the most searching of any in Sacred Scripture. They have hitherto been held as teaching that a Christian man, born by the Spirit of God into Christian dispositions, was admitted into a sphere of intelligence as well as to a state of mind which the unconverted man never knows nor can know. The words “natural man” have been interpreted to signify “the unregenerate man.” It has been understood that the term “spiritual man” meant a regenerate or converted man, and the opinion has largely been held that before a man is converted he is an enemy of God. Not only was an unconverted man considered to be an enemy of God, but it was thought that he was blind and could not understand the truth. And not only could such a man not understand the truth, but that he hates it; that he is at enmity with God and the law of God. This is predicated of the whole body of moral men. No matter how pure or upright or just or true or humble, if they have not passed through the mysterious change called conversion, it has been said that they do not understand spiritual things, and that that which is true in Religion is foreign to them and at home with Christian people. There is now a large number of observant men who do not believe this. I am one of them. “A large number of Christians don’t understand religious truth any better than I do,” says a right and fair-minded man, “they may have certain experiences,” says he, “which I have not; but so far as the nature of God is concerned, it is clearer to me than to many of them.” “I understand,” says he, “the law of God and the principle of responsibility to God as much as they do.” Taking the whole capitulary of Theology, an intelligent right-minded man says it is just as clear to him as to the converted man, and that it is impertinent for the latter to say to him: “I have a sense which you have

not, and understand the principles of Religion better than you do." And again, moral men ask, where is the evidence that Christians surpass other people in honesty and wisdom? Well, some Christians do, and some don't. There are as many people who surpass others in that regard out of the Church as in it. But the natural man cannot discern and cannot keep the law of God, "so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." A man passing along a river's bank sees a person struggling in the water ready to perish, rushes in, seizes him, clings to him and brings him out at the risk of his own life. Shall theologians say to such a man, "you don't do anything after all that pleases God." Does not the loving of little children please God? Does not loving God's people please God? And yet it is said that the natural, unconverted man cannot please God, although he may be kind, benevolent and upright. People who say this set aside reason, moral sense, discretion, kindness and mercy, and say that unless you have been converted, all these go for nothing; but that after you have gone through the mystic change called 'conversion' they count, because they have been sanctified. The fact is, such people totally misunderstand the Apostle's mental philosophy, for he does not mean the unregenerate man at all. If you read collateral scriptures, such as the latter part of the first chapter of Romans, you will find proof of this. The class of persons to whom he there alludes did "not like to retain God in their knowledge, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." Such was the natural man whom he must have had in his mind when writing the text. In the fifth chapter of Galatians, the fruits of the Spirit and the fruits of the flesh are held in antithesis. No man in the flesh can please God. Here is the fruit of living in the flesh: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Man is a two-fold being,—a double being. Though our outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. There is a top man and a bottom man, a superior and an inferior, a body-man and a mind-man. Up to a certain point, men and animals have the same kind of body—flesh, bones, blood—and the same kind of hunger and thirst. So far as the bodily organizations and appetites are concerned, men and animals are just alike. Thus, the fleshly man,

the man that lives under the continued influence of his mere animal nature, does not understand spiritual things, and does not seek them. Combative men do not understand peace, cowards don't understand courage, those who wallow in unbridled iniquity don't understand a pure conscience,—in short, a lower nature cannot mount into the higher nature. The animalism of human nature does not understand the delicacies and social refinements of life. The fleshly part of man's nature does not understand God nor religion nor morality. In respect to that part of his nature, he is no better than a wallowing swine, and if he does not develope his higher nature as well, he lives in the cellar of his brain, or in his ground story. But there is another kind of man—the man of social affections and good will to his wife and children, the man of reason, patriotism, magnanimity, etc. Everybody carries about with him these two natures: everybody has a lower as well as an upper tier in his brain. With the upper tier man understands God and His Government; with the lower tier he does not understand these. The man who lives in the lower portion of his nature cannot understand God nor his ways; but he who lives in the higher floor can, and in that part of his nature Divine things will appear plain and clear to him.

We go back, now for a moment to our opening remarks. Referring to the carnally-minded man, Paul meant a man who lived wallowing in his animal appetites and who hated the laws of God. It could not be said of good upright law-abiding men in the community that they hate God; and this appellation does not refer to them. Some upright men who have had no moral change wrought in them, if told that they hate God, would say that if such was the case they did not know it. Is there anything which urges a man to act, like hatred? It would be an affront to an upright, honest moral man to tell him that he hates God. It would be an insult to the righteous men of the whole community. Do you think an intelligent, morally developed man does not understand the teachings of the Holy Scriptures? He does understand, and appreciate them too. The whole mistake in reference to such a man comes from the fact that the mental philosophy or psychology of the Apostle Paul is not well discerned by many persons.

Persons of animal natures do not understand nor appreciate those possessing higher qualities. For example, the dastardly, cowardly person hates courage, neither can he know it, as it must be spiritually discerned. A man without taste does not understand the things of taste. Hundreds of people have no eye for form or color, and stare at the best work of art, exclaiming "it is pretty."

It is because their eyes have not been opened by education and cultivation. You can only influence them and win their admiration by flaming colors, such as scarlet, red or crimson, as it is only in them that they can see anything. And so throughout the whole community, and throughout the world. Do you suppose that Benedict Arnold understood George Washington, or that Robespierre understood the inward life of Howard, the philanthropist? Do you suppose that everybody understands his next neighbour? I know a saintly woman, whose thoughts seem as if they emanated from God, and who hungers and thirsts after nobleness of soul. Now come and sit for a while in a Hotel among gamblers and vile persons, and you will hear them say "I don't believe there is a virtuous woman in the world." They don't believe such a woman exists. Their passions are debased and they are rotten-hearted. They cannot discern the things of purity and virtue. These things are understood only by those who possess them, and those men have utterly lost them. A man who lives in the higher faculties lives in the line God would have him live, and they who live in the lower, in the very opposite direction.

From these facts we draw certain deductions. Unregenerate men among us understand what religion is and what it requires, and have therefore no excuse for not being religious. If a man were blind and lost his way, he might say, how can a blind man see the road? But if a man having the full use of his eyes loses his road, he is to blame. If a man in charge of a ship have no chart to guide him, and steer astray, he may plead ignorance; but if he has the chart, and becomes shipwrecked, through mis-management of his vessel, he is to blame. If a man did not understand the things of the Spirit, he would say, "If I have not good moral sense, I am not to blame for doing wrong;" and upon every principle of revealed truth and equity, he would be right in his conclusion. In the last day, a man who stands at the Bar of God and can say "I would not have sinned if I had moral vision, and could have seen the way I should take," will not deserve punishment. To strike a blind man would be unjust. To strike such a man would be cruel and unjust. It is because men are brought up in a Christian community and understand the way of Religion that so great a responsibility rests upon them. You know that lust and cruelty and lewdness and the lower parts of man's physical nature, in which some of you take delight, are not worthy of you. You know that to be sweet and forgiving, and to live by faith, hope and love, are right and becoming. And to the degree in which you live in the flesh, you are guilty before God. To the degree in which

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you could attain spiritual eminence, and do not do it, you are guilty. No man can attain unto spiritual knowledge except so far as he has power to do so. But some men say that all such power was lost by men through Adam. How can a thing be lost before it is born, or comes into existence? How have I lost anything in Adam? Can a man lose anything which he has not got? It seems contrary to reason to make such an assertion; and yet men say we all lost the power to perform the will of God through Adam, and that it was restored in Christ,—that the latter gave us the power which we had formerly lost. You never lost it. That the Divine Spirit helps men, there can be no question. It simply brings an influence to bear upon their natural sensibilities. It helps them as a father helps his child. That is, it simply helps nature. There are here, all around you, ten million million roots in Spring. Not one of them can help themselves in March or April. But the Sun comes to them and says: "O, children of the earth, I come to quicken you," and at once coaxes them up out of the ground. Why does he not coax up plants in the Desert? Because there are no roots there. There must be a root before there can be a plant. And before the root can grow, there must be the stimulus of the sun. So with the development of the human soul. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." That the Spirit of God "moves men" is a part of the original plan of Divine Omnipotence,—not the restoration of a fabulous loss which we sustained in Adam. You were born with all the moral force you need. You need simply to be elevated by Divine power, in order that the spiritual nature may be developed in you. We are blind by nature but not helpless. God calls us to serve Him. He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye perfect as He is perfect. The lower part of human nature does not appreciate the higher elements of that nature. The higher portion of human nature alone is influenced and stimulated by the Divine Spirit and the power of revealed and natural truth. Why do you live in your lower nature? Why not make your higher nature predominant? It is your fault, your sin, your ruin, if you do not make it so.

Unconverted men can and do contemplate and understand the great elements of religion. Take the very foundation of all religion: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." Do not unconverted men understand that? Take that man who influences one of your

wealthiest banks. "If that man," says an unconverted person, "can he a good christian, I think I can be one." "I admire the idea," says another, "of being a true christian, if I could only find one, I would make a journey to see him, just as I would go to see Barnum's show." The fruits of religion unconverted men understand, so far as they are produced. Such men not only understand them, but the principles of the religion which produces them. In the fifth chapter of Galatians the Apostle says that the fruits of the Spirit are love, etc. Do not natural men love *Love*? Is it not beautiful everywhere? In little children is it not beautiful? Even when they come to manhood and womanhood is it not beautiful? Strange it is that we make sport of the most sacred spot in our existence. I know not why it is so. And yet the love which makes two hearts one is so beautiful that no poet can sing without singing its merits. It is so beautiful that all the people in your state, and town and village love to think about "loving." Talk about the unconverted man not understanding this fruit of the Spirit? While a man is making his way through a hard and coarse world, friendless and alone, is there not one thing which holds him steadfast to his belief in human nature? Yes, it is the silver cord of love that leads back to virtue and mother. This is the silver cord that would bring him back to himself. It is the noblest of loves. But the fruit of the Spirit includes "joy." The "natural" or "animal" man cannot understand joy, but an unconverted man may and does, and is seeking it all his life long. Indeed, it is after joy that the great tide of humanity is flowing. But men, generally, don't understand how to get it. It is like gold in quartz rocks. They know it is there, but don't understand how to get it out. The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace. Peace here means that tranquility which results from the perfect and symmetrical development of every part of human nature. Another fruit is long-suffering. Men admire long-suffering. Think of a long-suffering school master, a long-suffering mother, or a long-suffering neighbour. Men like to see long-suffering in other folks, but they don't like to practise it themselves. Gentleness is another fruit. There is a great deal of gentleness in the world that means nothing. The gentleness of the Gospel springs from a man who has power in him. A man who possesses it is full of gentle treatment to everybody, and wherever you see it,—whether in dog or man,—you admire it. A large, gentle dog carries himself along in majesty, while an ill-tempered little cur comes along and bites his legs and torments him generally. But the dog is too high-minded to trouble himself about the little cur, and passes along without

noticing him. When a man is kind and gentle to everybody, everybody says he is magnanimous. When I was a boy I was surrounded by father, mother, brothers and sisters,—we had thirteen in our family. We had a general good feeling amongst us, but troubles for me sometimes arose. After a while, Aunt Chandler came to live with us, and every side of her that touched me produced pleasure. I had always the misfortune of being in trouble of some kind or other. If I was late at school she had some excuse for me. If I disturbed the family in any way, she was my mediator, and I felt as though she carried me in her bosom. I was a mercurial little fellow, and she was forever wrapping me up in her mantle. She had a kind, sympathising heart and constantly kept my atmosphere warm and cheery. We still have some such folks amongst us; but I wish there were a million where there is at present only one. It is well to have genius, but incomparably better that every one who comes near us should feel that we have this power. That is what is wanted. On one of these summer days you go out into the fields and see blossoms everywhere, and hear the birds singing in the trees; but tell if you can what makes that day a vision of the other life beyond? There are persons who carry an eternity of summer about with them. It is certainly much better to have such goodness of heart than oceans of wealth. In regard to all these things, the unconverted man understands them and admires them too. More than that, when you put them all together and fashion them into a human character; when you find a person representing all these qualities of heart, you will find that there is not an individual who does not feel that he cannot venerate him, and love him. I remember an old woman who lived over a cooper's shop, where she had not a moment's peace from the noise beneath. Yet, in such a place lived mother Rice, the sweetest and gentlest of persons. She was the light of my Church, and there was not a man who lived in that neighbourhood,—even those who lived by gambling,—who would say one syllable against her. Wherever trouble was, there came she, and wherever she came, the Angels of God came. Men saw that she possessed real, genuine religion, and there were none of them who did not reverence her. When you say that an unconverted man does not understand religion, I say that he does. He may not sympathize with all the folks who think they have religion; but he does with those who have it in reality. If I am to hear music, bring me one of the old masters, Ole Bull or Paginini, but not a boy who is just beginning to learn to play. When men are taught that others have been raised up to a higher life, they are encouraged to follow the example

thus given them. The man never lived who was made a Christian by a single stroke. You have to go through a severe test,—a discipline of grace,—and it is a long time before a man can come into that Christian state in which he will glorify his Father in Heaven.

When men go out into society, they mostly follow the laws of society: they follow the regulations of industry and the regulations of politicians. But no law ever rises higher than the average common sense of the community. The laws respecting honesty never rise higher than the honesty of the people who make them. Sometimes the average runs very low. A man who is not nobler than the law requires him to be, is not half a man. When, therefore, a man is raised by the influence of religion into Christ, what is the development into which he is called? When a man looks inwardly he says to himself, "I am good-natured enough when not out of temper, pure enough when not impure. I confess I have done a good many things I had better not have done, like a good bargain when I can get it, and don't exactly love my neighbour as myself. I would not murder anyone on any account whatever. I want to live a decent moral life. But when you come to open the Bible and hold out the noble character of the Christian, and show how the true follower of Christ controls selfishness, passion, pride, etc., why I am not so good as I might be. I admit that I am sinful and inclined to do wrong." If, when sleeping to-night, you were transformed by some angelic power, and found when you arose in the morning, that you chose the things of the Spirit, would you not say that you had been born again? Many a man if so transformed during the night, would not know himself in the morning. If so sudden a change came over the great majority of people, they would hardly know themselves, as it is above the average experience. Passing through severe trials and struggles changes the nature of a man. I am not the man I formerly was. The greatest year in my life was that in which Fort Sumter was bombarded. The whole spirit of the nation was lifted up, the flame of patriotism kindled within it. I saw men suddenly inflamed with benevolence and patriotism; and for months and years afterwards they were actuated by a love of the flag and of the Union, and by a hatred of slavery, engendered at that time. It all came with a paroxysm. I have seen men brought into the Spirit of God, when the light and the power of God shone down upon them, and lifted them suddenly up out of their former life; and though far from being perfect, the first principles of a higher life was in every one of them. But they had got no farther than

a boy taken from the Five Points, when he has learned to keep his face and hands clean. When such a boy is first sent to school he cannot read, but he is determined that he will learn and become respectable. But that boy does not understand Mathematics when he begins to cipher. Christ says to us "follow me and become my scholars." He does not expect a man to be perfect, or to become perfect all at once. It is altogether wrong to say that the moment a man is converted he is a saint. He is only beginning to be a saint. The kingdom of heaven in the human heart is at first like a grain of mustard seed. It is hid in the heart and, like leaven, little by little it is working there, until the whole is leavened. It is a question of gradual development, although the seed may be received instantaneously. But to say that because a man is going to school, he is an educated man would offend our common-sense. Let us take the facts as we find them. If Christians fulfilled the law of Christ as they should, would it be necessary to prove the Divinity of Christ and his religion? Do not unity and piety and goodness carry with them their own evidence? One reason why men don't love the Bible is because Christians do not live up to its teachings. Do not men admire its principles and honour them. If there were an influence abroad in the world which all men saw raised men to a higher life, would not they hail it with delight? When the Sun of Righteousness shines into a man's heart it starts him upon the new life. Do you know how to promote orthodoxy? It is by the example of a godly life. The moment you begin to argue to prove a thing, you admit it is subject to doubt. If you try to prove that all men admit the existence of a God, you at once admit that there is some doubt about it. Men don't agree as to the nature of the atonement, nor the things of the Spirit, nor God's moral government, nor as to what conversion is, nor any one intellectual position, but they are always united on the subject of the "Beauty of Holiness." Goodness unites men, but sin divides them. Although I am a Protestant I love every man, I love a Roman Catholic who is beautiful in his life and conduct. The latter may not like me, but I love him. I can throw the golden mantle of love over every one. I love both the Baptists and the Methodists, yet I do not believe either in Immersion or the Armenian doctrine. We are indebted to their great men for the good they have done, and give them credit and love them for it. I love all Christians who love the Lord Jesus Christ. They may not like me, but that is their misfortune; they don't know what they have lost by not doing so. I don't want to break up the various denominations of Christians.

The mischief done by them is not through their being divided into separate sects, but through their not behaving themselves when they come together. Let everybody keep house for himself as he pleases, but let all live in peace. I would not take down the Episcopal Church if I could. If any man wants to be a hard-fisted, cast steel kind of a Christian let him be a Presbyterian, if he wants to praise God in the loud, boisterous manner of the Methodists, let him join them. But he must not interfere with other men's consciences. Some may say to me, "You will be damned if you don't believe my creed." Well I say, I'll be damned if I believe all that they accept, for I believe much of it to be untrue. I don't believe in Calvinism. I would be damned if I said I did, for I don't believe in it. God is the best hotel-keeper that ever existed, for he can suit all tastes and appetites. But some fellow gets up at the table and says that everybody must eat the same kind of bread that he eats, and drink from the same cup from which he drinks. Let everyone choose from God's bounties for himself. But let us be one in Christ. "Let your light so shine among men that others seeing your good works may glorify your Father which is in Heaven." When I stand in the Art Galleries of Paris or London and examine the works of the great masters, whether on canvass or in marble, I am delighted in their contemplation, for I love beauty. So let Christians live that when men see them, they may say to them, "What are the ways in which you have been taught, in order that we may walk in them?" That is the true spirit of the religion that has to conquer the world. You must live more beautiful lives, in other words, you must live God-like. When Jesus died for us we were yet his enemies. He takes care of those who love him, just as a mother takes care of her child; she asks nothing for her pains but the privilege of doing her child good. It is because it was given her of God. That is the God whom you are called to serve; this is the religion which you are called to embrace. A life moulded and formed by such a religion meets, I believe, the respect and admiration of every right-minded man in this community. This is my first meeting with you in Charlottetown, and my last one. Many of us will not stand face to face again until the thrones are set, and many of us when next we meet will stand on the immortal shore. By all that is reasonable and pure and right-minded, I adjure you to accept as your school-master the Lord Jesus Christ, denying the flesh and the works thereof.

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